



**Statement by Governor Aníbal Acevedo-Vilá before
United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary**

**Briefing on
“Alleged Federal Bureau of Investigation
(FBI) misconduct in Puerto Rico”**

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Mr. Ranking Member Conyers and Members present, thank you for inviting me here today. My name is Eduardo Bhatia and I am the representative of the Governor of Puerto Rico before the Congress and the Executive branch of the Federal Government. On behalf of Governor Aníbal Acevedo-Vilá, thank you for conducting this very important briefing to examine recent operations of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in Puerto Rico, and please accept the Governor's regrets for not being able to be here in person.

I will proceed to read Governor Aníbal Acevedo-Vilá's statement for the Record:

As Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico I lend my full support to this important Congressional Briefing and, on behalf of the People of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, thank all of you here today for the time and effort devoted to an open and frank discussion of the controversy that has emerged as the Puerto Rico Department of Justice (PRDOJ) tries to fully exercise its legitimate and fundamental powers in the discharge of its duties.

Today, panelists will present, for the Record, before Members of Congress and staff of the House Committee on the Judiciary, clear testimony, including graphic images, regarding recent FBI

operations in Puerto Rico. Individually and combined, these FBI actions have raised legitimate and substantial questions in all sectors of our society. Individuals, independent groups, the media, academia, religious and political organizations, both in Puerto Rico and in the United States, have expressed publicly and to me personally their concerns regarding the recent reports of FBI operations on the Island.

The public interest requires the healthy and strong existence of the mutual cooperation between federal, state and local governments. That is why, fully consistent with the Commonwealth-Federal coextensive jurisdictional framework, we have been and continue to be, willing partners of any federal agency in pursuing the war against terrorism and protecting the safety of our citizens. It must be clearly stated that in no way does the Commonwealth wish to impinge on any FBI investigation related to domestic terrorist activity nor to infringe on the FBI's ability to do its job.

But just like the FBI must do its job, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, through its Attorney General, has the right to require and obtain due cooperation from federal agencies when exercising its legitimate investigative powers.

The FBI's denial of information to the PRDOJ during its investigations into the shooting death of Mr. Filiberto Ojeda Ríos and the alleged use of excessive force and pepper-spray against several journalists during FBI interventions in Puerto Rico is an example of an unfortunate breakdown in the relationship of coordination and support that should exist between local and federal authorities.

Too many questions remain and the people rightfully demand answers. That is why we are investigating, and we MUST investigate, whether any local criminal laws were violated during the execution of both operations.

To that end, it is of the utmost importance that the PRDOJ receives from all sources, including the FBI, all relevant information to conduct the most complete and thorough investigations. However, we have seen how the ordinary and simple task of obtaining the most basic information from a sister law enforcement agency, in this case, has become a Herculean struggle for the PRDOJ. That is why, as you may know, last week Attorney General Roberto Sánchez Ramos filed two civil actions in federal court against the FBI.

Unlike traditional Federal-Commonwealth full cooperation in investigations on matters of public corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering, and many other law enforcement matters, lack of coordination on these recent events adversely affects the discharge of our Commonwealth-Federal shared solemn duty to protect the people. And it unnecessarily continues to impact the public image of the FBI in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I am here today to support all possible mechanisms –including your direct intervention- that would foster a better communication between the local government and federal agencies in Puerto Rico. That must include assisting local officials in their investigations. Our goal should be the same: reach new and improved levels of understanding, coordination and respect in the relationship between the FBI, the USDOJ and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico departments and agencies, including the Police and the Department of Justice.

As Governor, on behalf of the People of Puerto Rico, I once again want to express our gratitude to the Members of Congress and their staff for conducting this important briefing. I also want to thank all the panelists and witnesses that have traveled from Puerto Rico to

participate here today and be part of our joint effort to obtain full cooperation and an open accounting from the FBI.

I look forward to working closely with each of you on this important matter.